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A Midsummer Night's Dream – A SCENIC DESIGN

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A Midsummer Night's Dream – A SCENIC DESIGN

By

Grace Trudeau

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College of the University of Nebraska

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of the Master of Fine Arts

Major: Theatre Arts

Under the Supervision of Professor Joshua Madsen

Lincoln, Nebraska

May 2021

A Midsummer Night's Dream – A SCENIC DESIGN

Grace Trudeau, M.F.A.

University of Nebraska, 2020

Advisor: Joshua Madsen

The purpose of this thesis is to provide research, supporting paperwork, production photographs, and other materials which document the scenic design for the Nebraska Repertory Theatre's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare. This thesis contains the following: research images indicating thematic ideas for Athens and the Forest, weather patterns for Athens and Woodland, environmental textures and colors, shapes, and forms; preliminary sketches and photographs of the 1/4" scale model; a full set of drafting plates and paint samples, a set dressing reference book; paperwork generated during the rehearsal process; and additional information. Archival production photographs are available by contacting the designer or the Nebraska Repertory Theatre.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I received my thesis assignment for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the Fall of 2019. The gratifying feeling of working on a Shakespeare production was undeniable, since I had previously never worked on a Shakespeare show. The challenges Shakespeare incorporated within the scenic transitions are exciting to me—especially because Shakespeare left no note of any scene transitions other than the occasional *Enter* and *Exit*. After the Nebraska Repertory Theatre director, Andrew Park, announced the 2020-2021 season, I quickly began to collaborate with my show's director, Christina Kirk. The creative and production team also included Hali Liles (costume designer), Cameron L. Strandin later Abby Smith (lighting designer), Emily Callahan (sound designer), Nathan Alexander (props designer), Austin Elledge (technical director), and Kayci Johnston (stage manager).

William Shakespeare wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1595. It has been the subject of extensive production history ever since, but Ludwig Tieck's 1843 production in Potsdam, Prussia was particularly noteworthy. Composer Felix Mendelssohn wrote incidental music for that production, and it remains popular to this day. Director Max Reinhardt did five separate productions of the play in Berlin, the first of which was in 1905. It introduced the stage revolve, intended to keep the action moving. The most significant recent production was Peter Brook's 1970 treatment, which opened in London and a year later in New York. Both productions featured the scenic and costume designs of Sally Jacobs, with actors on trapeze platforms within an invisible forest. The play is set in Athens and the Forest outside of the city. The plot revolves around the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta, with a subplot of conflict among four Athenian lovers and another subplot between Titania, the fairy queen and Oberon, the fairy king. Shakespeare created a play about the entanglement of lovers, quarrels between lovers, and the battles between love and duty. The four young Athenians run away to the Forest, but there Oberon's elfin attendant named Puck makes both the boys fall in love with the same girl. The four stumble

through the Forest each pursuing the other, while Puck helps Oberon play a trick on Titania. Throughout the trials of all the lovers, the “rude mechanicals” (skilled tradesmen) prepare the wedding show which they perform at the end of the play. In that end, Puck reverses his magic on the mortal lovers and on Titania. The lovers return home to Athens, where each couple reconciles and marries.

At our first meeting Christina explained her vision, which was to create a modern and contemporary *Midsummer* emphasizing Titania’s first monologue for inspiration in relationship to the human effect on climate change. The lines “Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain, as in revenge, have sucked up from the sea contagious fogs, which, falling in the land, hath every pelting River made so proud that they have all were born there continents” (A2S1), had a particular resonance with Prof. Kirk. Therefore, our production focuses on Titania’s speech to Oberon as the source of inspiration for our concept, stating “The spring, the summer, the chiding autumn, angry winter; change Their wonted liveries, and the mazéd world by their increase now knows not which is which. And the same progeny of evils comes from our debate, from our dissension” (A2S1). As she infers, according to the director’s interpretation, we the people are the toxic chaos which causes the imbalance within nature through our consumption. Balance is necessary for the restoration of peace between the worlds. Shakespeare causes chaos and restores peace through the natural force of love. I initially grappled with the headiness of personifying climate change into a scenic environment. Christina also requested the added challenge of minimal and quick scenic changes. After much discussion and guidance from my mentor, Joshua Madsen, I came to my initial design ideas where my design showcases the reflection of form in the industrial and the natural world, featuring the life-giving tree in its epicenter.

A Midsummer Night’s Dream was originally set to open in October of 2020, but due to Covid-19 the Rep moved the show to April of 2021. Then with Covid-19 continuing to be a problem for production, Andrew Park moved the show to October of 2021. My graduation is in May 2021, so

changes in my thesis production dates will allow me to complete my thesis documentation ending with a zoom performance of the show. However, after graduation I plan to return to Lincoln and finish my job as scenic designer during tech week.

This thesis provides a detailed overview of the process of designing and producing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Nebraska Repertory Theatre. It documents initial design meetings, research, conceptual discussion, renderings, supporting paperwork, and material deployed in the production. Appendices include research images, preliminary design sketches, 1/4" scale model photos, drafting plates, design images, paint elevations, a set dressing book, and additional paperwork that emerged during the rehearsal process.

CHAPTER 2: PRE-PRODUCTION DESIGN PROCESS

2.0 DESIGN CONCEPTUALIZATION

Beginning in the spring of 2020, I began to study the script in detail, analyzing the show, and designing the scenery. Prior to any meetings, I initially envisioned the production as a Victorian period piece with large dresses, big wigs, along with much environmental whimsy and twinkle. However, our first production meeting quickly scrapped those thoughts when Christina Kirk spoke of her vision: a modern piece centered around the idea of climate change. Dismissing thoughts of a whimsical Victorian forest from my mind, I began research on how to personify climate change. I struggled to discern how to embody climate change—should the set be made of recycled materials? Or are we working towards a less pointed reference? As I began sorting out these thoughts, our in-person production meetings ceased, and we switched to Zoom conferences as the peak of Covid-19 cancelled in-person instruction. The transition from collaborating in-person to online took a toll on my design process. The collaboration was difficult, and at the time we believed the move to online was temporary. We thus continued to prepare a final design packet in order to complete a budget for the show by the end of the semester. Due to personal struggles with the process, the scenic design result was a serviceable design rather than one aesthetically appropriate or authentic for our production. The show was originally slated for the Carson Theatre, which Rep director Andrew Park moved into the Howell Theatre during the summer. My original design utilized the Carson Theatre as a proscenium space, so the spatial transition was not a problem. Basic requirements for the show, including quick transitions, a mirrored form in the Forest and Athens, climate change, muddled my mind when designing. I worked to complete the design rather than investigate the play's spatial exigencies and ask requisite questions to create a world which remained true to our concept.

In order to remedy my confusion, I first of all pursued a visual understanding of climate change. I sought images of recycled materials and found evidence in plastic water bottles, cardboard boxes, and detritus in varying degrees of decay. During an unplanned discussion with Christina, however, I learned that her idea of climate change was merely an underlying reference to the idea of forgiving ourselves for our trespasses. This idea derived from the modern connotation of chaos created when mortal Athenians cross into the fairy kingdom of the Forest. We decided to try a less literal representation and not use trash as set material. The idea of climate change was now to manifest itself as changing weather patterns which reflected the unpredictable moods of the characters. By switching the emphasis of climate change to weather patterns, the visual fluctuation of balance between man and nature became easier to design. Chaos ensues when there is an imbalance, both in Athens and the Forest. For example, when the Athenians invade the Forest, it falls into imbalance which as a result causes chaos.

Once I understood the need for balance, I began to investigate how people today seek balance with nature and how nature herself seeks balance. What forms found in nature find themselves replicated in man-made architecture? How do people supplement their need for nature in their everyday lives? And how does nature respond to humanity? My research centered on finding parallel forms: buildings to trees, gravel to concrete, or gardens to wildflowers. The parallels allowed me to identify important scenic transitions, which were indeed more than Athens to Forest, but Athens to Forest to Athens changed by nature. After the Athenians find the balance, they had sought in the Forest, Athens needed to change in order to reflect the mood shift. I found myself challenged again to identify human emotions as analogous to changes in weather. For example, anger is red and hot, while sadness is blue and icy. Such analogues helped to determine the emotional shifts necessary on stage, Lighting and the sounds of nature added detail to the canvas I created for them.

One aspect of the scenic design to which caught my attention was the central tree. I knew our Forest needed to revolve around the tree of life, or “Titania’s bower” in the script. Retaining this key scenic element in mind, I worked to find how it related to the Athenian world. Only later in my research did I discover the image I sought, which I found in Lincoln’s Sunken Gardens (located at the corner of 27th and D Streets). The gazebo there is an iron frame with silhouetted cutouts of the Lincoln skyline, along with foliage atop Greek columns of the Corinthian order supporting the gazebo’s dome. This structure became my inspiration for the relationship between Athens and the Forest. It meant placing the tree (or nature herself) in a cage, with Athens revolving around the tree, utilizing Reinhardt’s stage revolve. In subsequent conversations with director Kirk and my mentor Prof. Madsen I formulate a concept statement: “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* reveals the chaotic imbalance between man and nature.”

2.1 SCENE BREAKDOWN

A MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM
MODERN WORLD CITY AND
WOODS

Page	ACT.S	PEOPLE	LOCATION	NEEDS	VERB
ACT 1					
7	1	THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, EGEUS, HERMIA, DEMETRIUS, LYSANDER, HELENA,	ATHENS, EVENING 1	SOME KIND OF LEVELS TO VISUALLY DESCRIBE KING VS PEOPLE	REACTING
25	2	QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, STARVYLING	IN WOODS OUTSIDE ATHENS, EVENING 1	CLIPBOARD, PENCIL, SCRIPTS	PREPARING
ACT 2					
35	1	FAIRY, ROBIN GOODFELLOW, OBERON, TATANIA, DEMETRIUS, HELENA,	WOODS, EVENING 2	SPECIAL FLOWER, TWO OPPOSITE ENTRANCES	QUARRELING
53	2	TITANIA, FAIRIES, OBERON, LYSANDER, HERMIA, ROBIN, DEMETRIUS, HELENA,	WOODS, NIGHT 2 INTO MORNING 3	SLEEPING SPOTS, FLOWER,	ROCKING
ACT 3					
69	1	BOTTOM, QUINCE, SNOUT, STARVYLING, ROBIN, FLUTE, TITANIA, FAIRIES,	WOODS DAY 3	SCRIPTS, BAGS, DONKEY GEAR	SCRAMBLING
83	2	OBERON, ROBIN, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, HELENA,	WOODS EVENING 3	FLOWER	FRUSTRATING
ACT 4					
121	1	TITANIA, BOTTOM, FAIRIES, OBERON, ROBIN, THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, HELENA	WOODS DAY 4	DONKEY HEAD REMOVED, HORNS PLAY,	REVEALING
137	2	QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, STARVYLING	MERCHANTS HOUSE DAY 4	THINGS TO GATHER	REJOICING
ACT 5					
143	1	THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, LYSANDER, QUINCE, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, STARVYLING, SNUG, DEMETRIUS,	ATHENS EVENING 4	PAPER FOR THESEUS, CHAIRS, PLAY SPACE, MANTLE, STABBING X2	CELEBRATING
169		ROBIN, OBERON, TITANIA,	ATHENS NIGHT 4	FLUTE FOR SONG	BLESSING

Athens



Relationship



Mirrored Form



Industry



Concrete Texture



Urban Jungle



Black Plastic Shine

A Midsummer Night's Dream



City Light



Environmentals



Oxidized Copper

Woods



Wooden Forms



Stars



Druids



Relationship



Female Form



Tree Carvings
A Midsummer Night's Dream



Mossy Bark



Totem

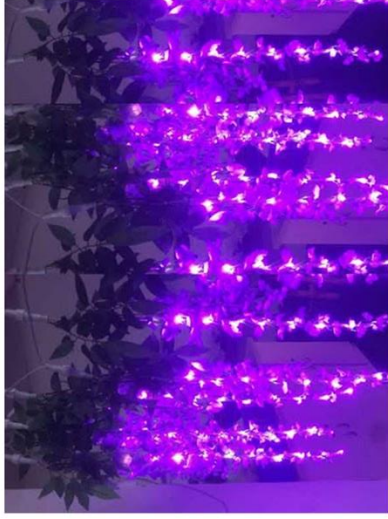


White Moss

Tree



Whimsical Droop



LED lighting



Mood Setting



Warm glow



White flower



Fullness

A Midsummer Night's Dream

2.3 DESIGN DISCUSSION

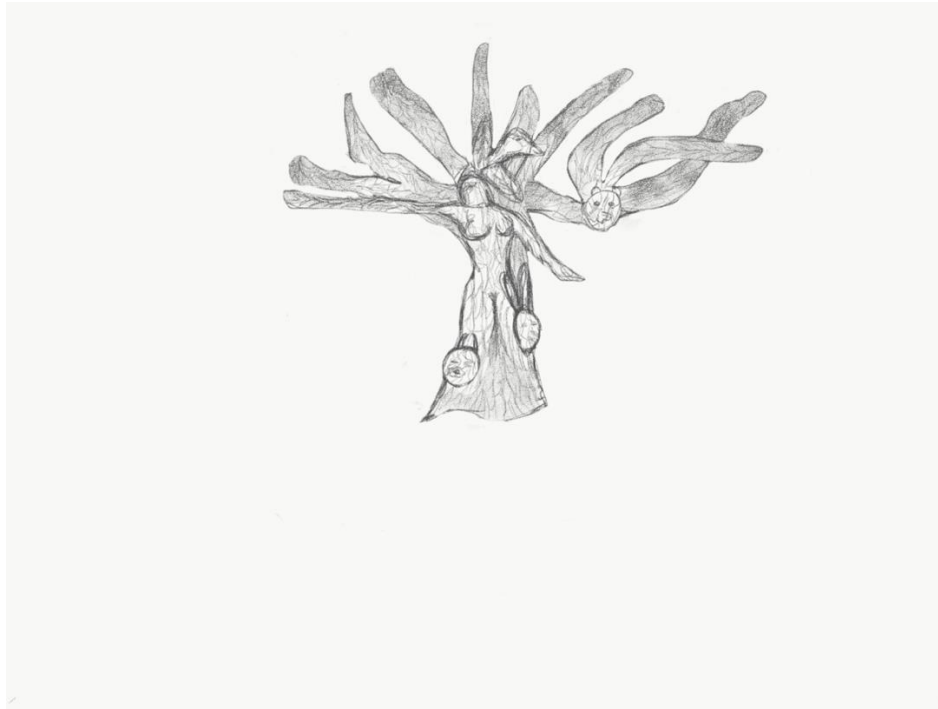
With the concept statement, “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* reveals the chaotic imbalance between man and nature,” I began drafting in Vectorworks. Stage design requires an understanding of space, so drafting a preliminary model serves as a viable method of working through ideas. As noted above, I struggled with my first design. I had the concept statement, the research, and the parameters for the show but I struggled to combine all these elements. I began to solve the problem of quick transitions. My first thought was the theatrical convention of the drop curtain, which involved flying the representation of Athens out of the performance space. My next idea was to create doors painted with the “Athenian” skyline, actually the Lincoln skyline for our show, sliding offstage to reveal the Forest. The problem with these solutions is they created a barrier between the two worlds. Prof. Kirk’s wish, however, was to mirror Athens and the Forest. The concept of a mirror image so intrigued her that she double cast Hippolyta as Titania and Theseus as Oberon. The final solution to the “mirror image” of Athens and the Forest was the deployment of a Reinhardt-style stage revolve.

Transitions were, however, only one problem to solve. The two worlds also needed levels and movement within the space to indicate various areas, both Athenian and sylvan. I began with an idea from a local public stair ramp. This architectural feature derived from Prof. Kirk’s research of city squares, art installations, and public gathering spaces. The ramp for the show was to be a semi-circular structure. The ramp also divided into three smaller sections, all of which were to be independently mobile. Although this idea provided movement, levels, and dynamic staging—it does not create an analogous form in the Forest and Athens. This idea was flawed because it hindered the visual transition from city to woodland. There was then the problem of paint treatment—what treatment can be industrial for Athens but natural for the Forest? As I reinvestigated this problem, I discovered the idea of a public forum was accurate, but my research was solely focused on the city areas and lacking an analogue with

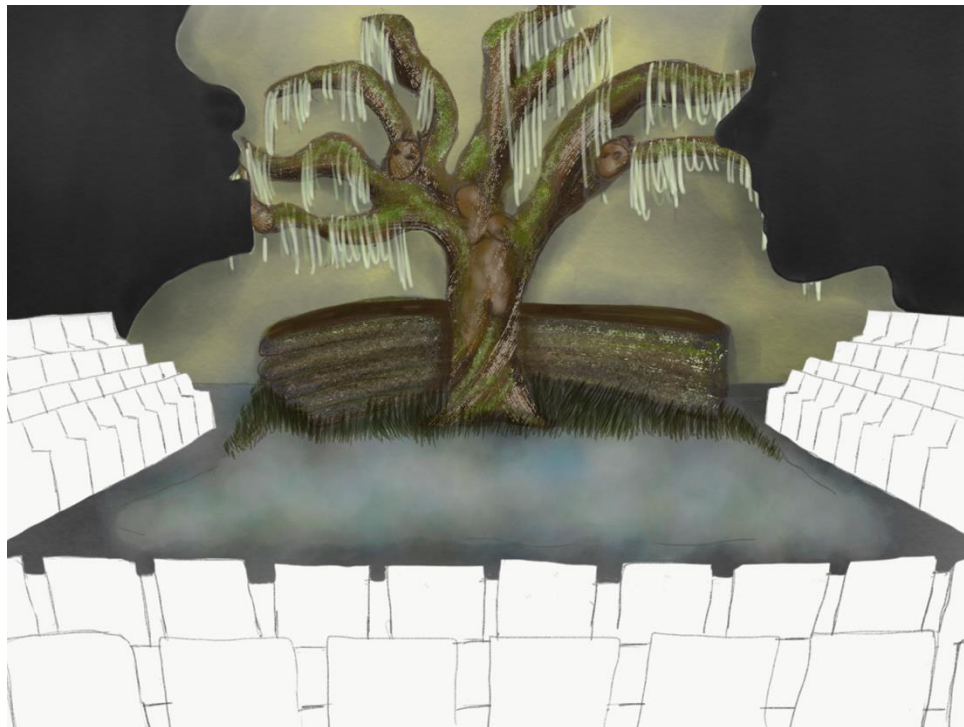
nature. I then settled on the idea of the gazebo atop the stage revolve, reminiscent of the gazebo in the Sunken Gardens. The stronger idea for transition with the stage revolve helped me understand the need for a stronger correlation between Athens and Forest.

Prof. Kirk was excited by the design's evolution, and Andrew Park emailed me to state his enthusiasm for the stage revolve. I relinquished the idea the set's need to carry the whole play. The set now became a canvas on which the play was to unfold. Along with the various problems with my original design, a conversation with Austin Elledge revealed to me the inconsistency between my design and my research. The one element which has remained in both iterations is the tree. However, the original tree I based on a twisted South Carolina oak tree covered in moss. Austin had posed the simple question, "Do Nebraska trees have moss?" This question was the true catalyst for my conceptual dilemma with the design. Not even the central element of the environment was authentic to the concept and therefore needed to change.

2.4 PRELIMINARY RENDERINGS



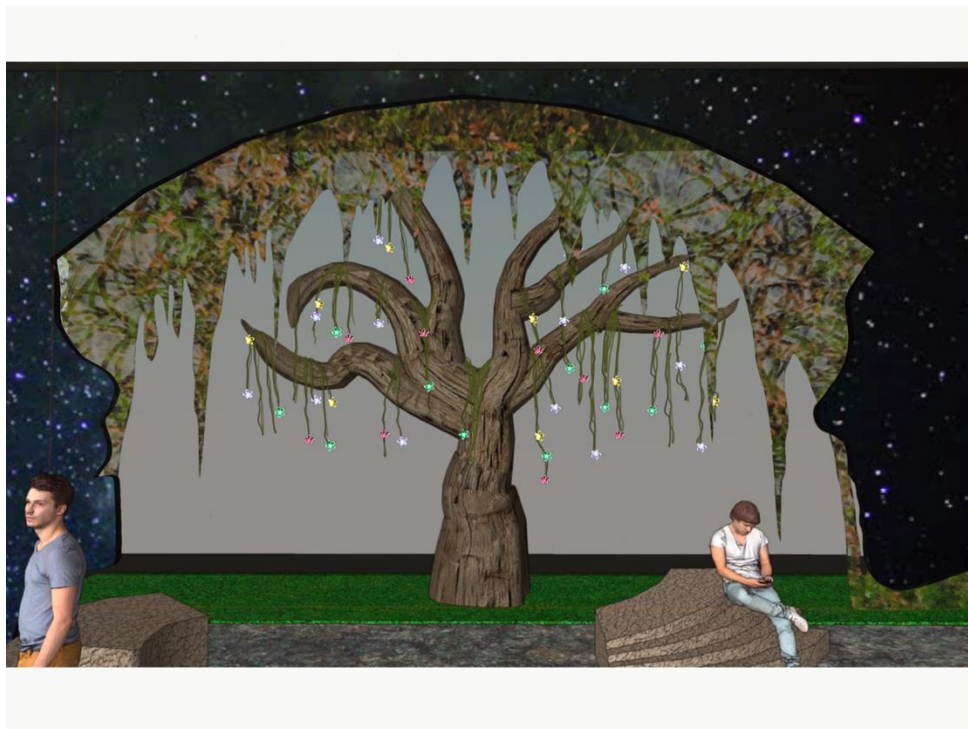
A rough pencil sketch of the tree.



A digital rendering with the tree in the Carson Theatre.



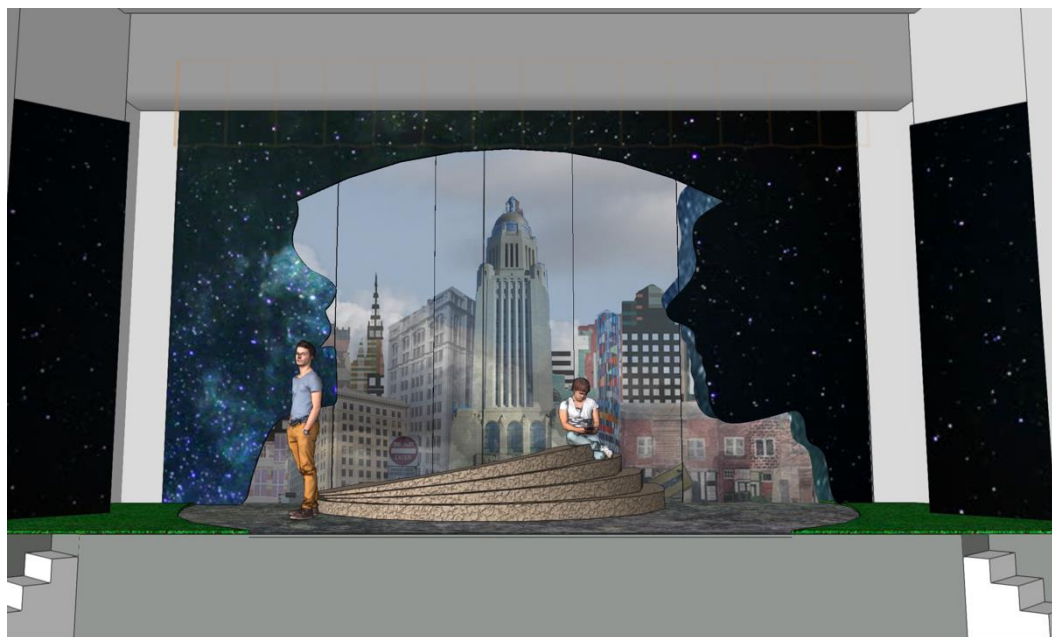
A digital rendering with the original idea of Athens communicated through signs.



A 3D Vectorworks model of the tree with an initial lighting idea.

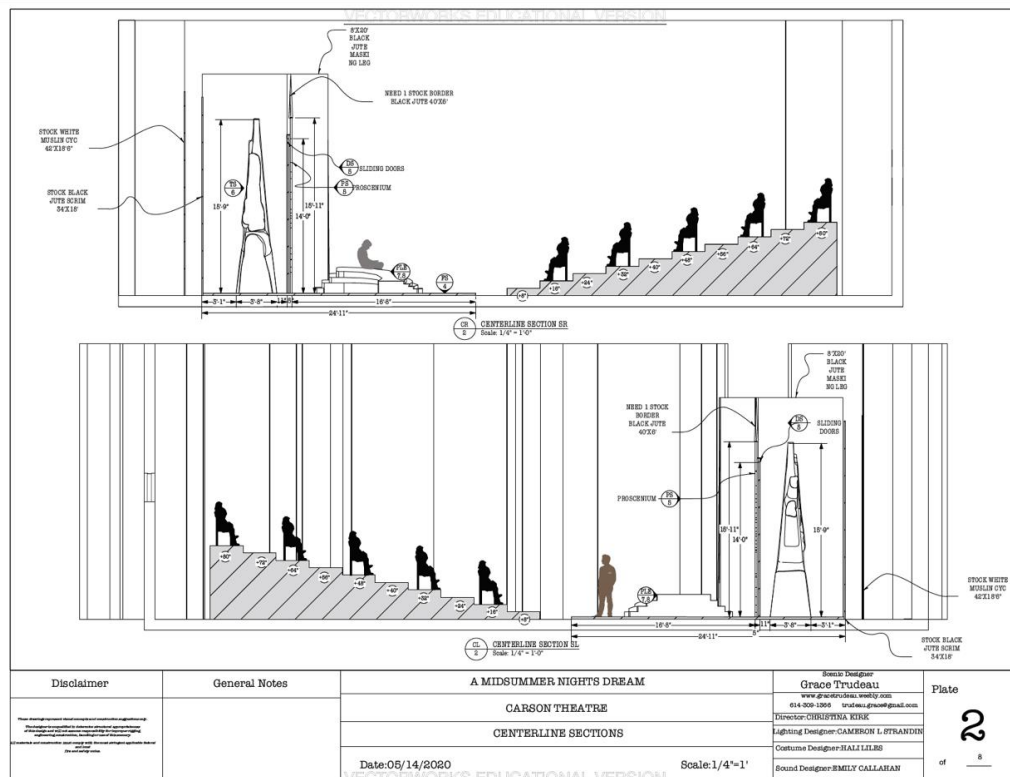


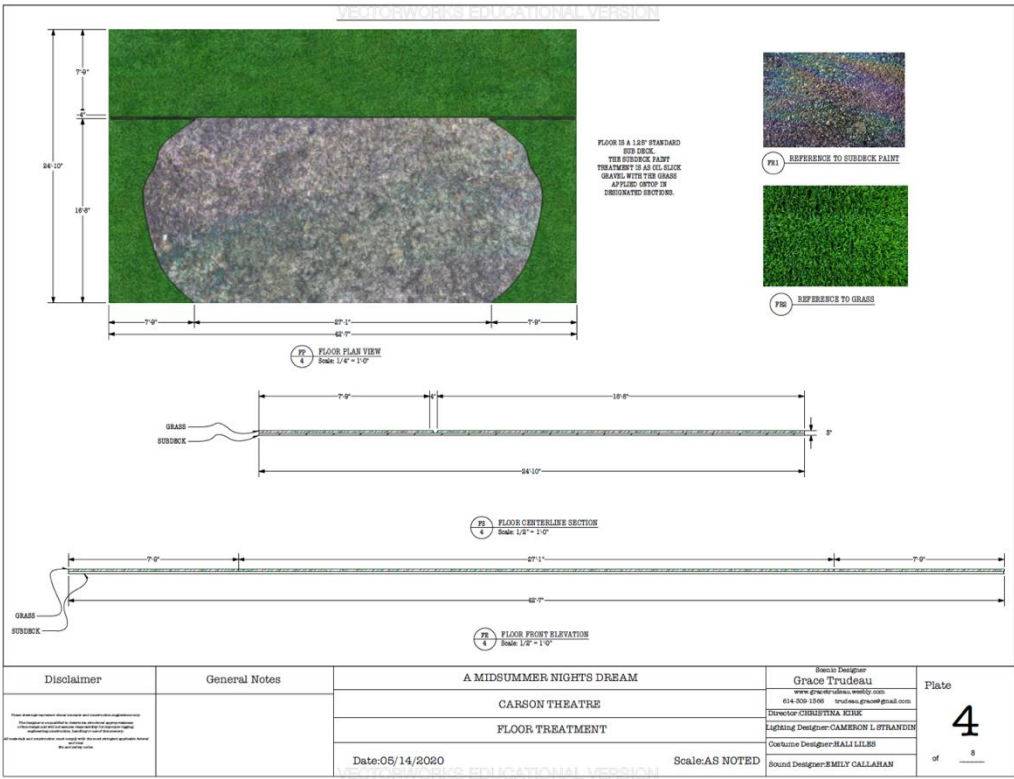
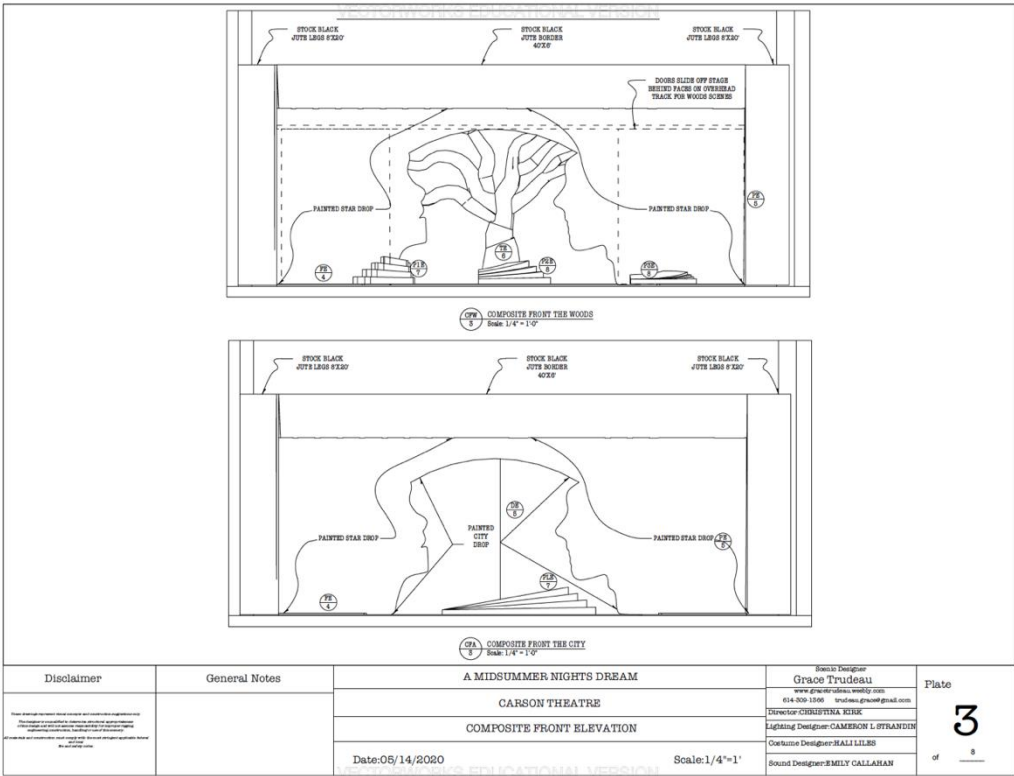
A 3D Vectorworks model with the three stair units.

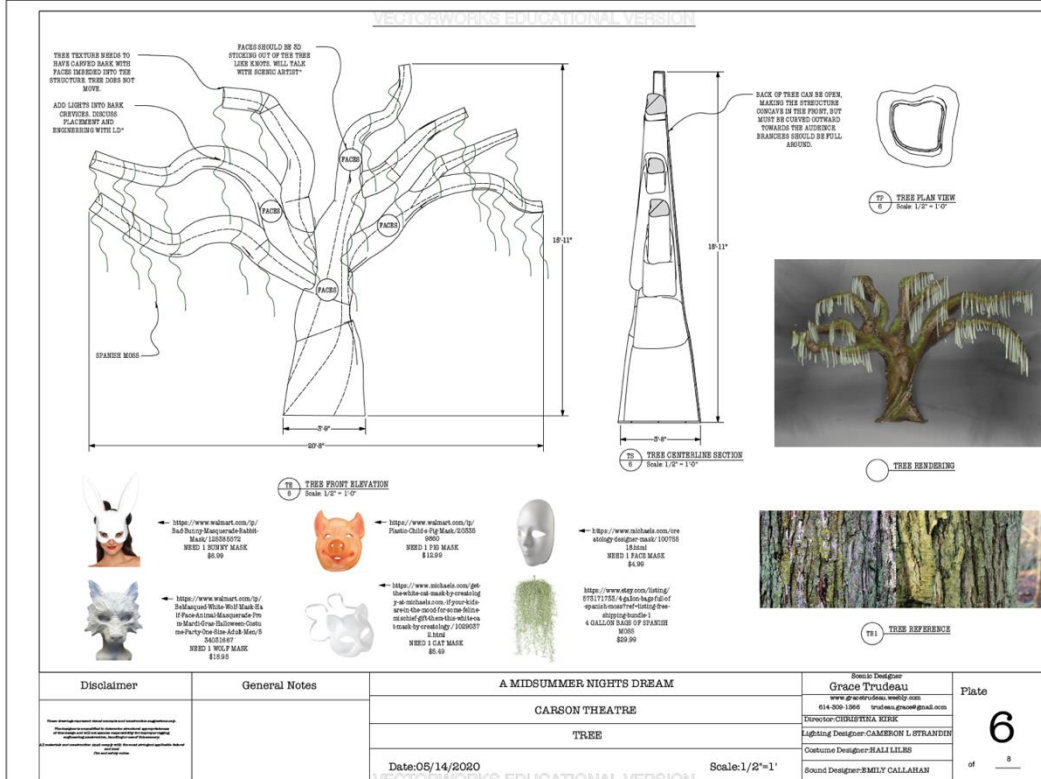
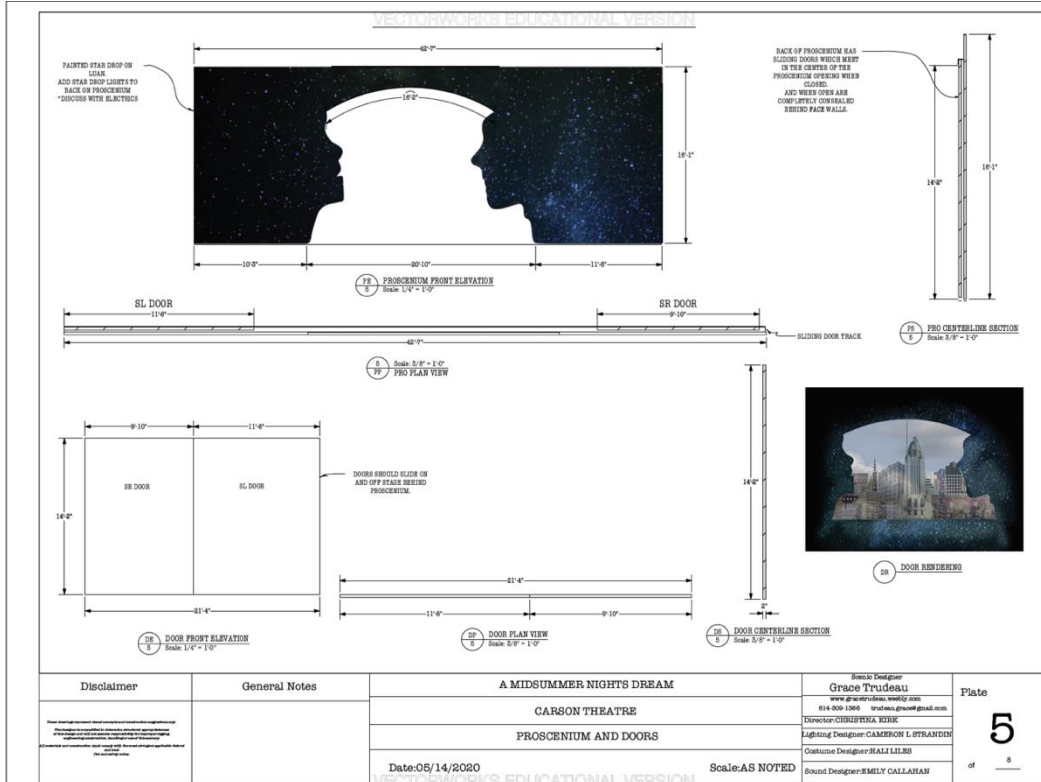


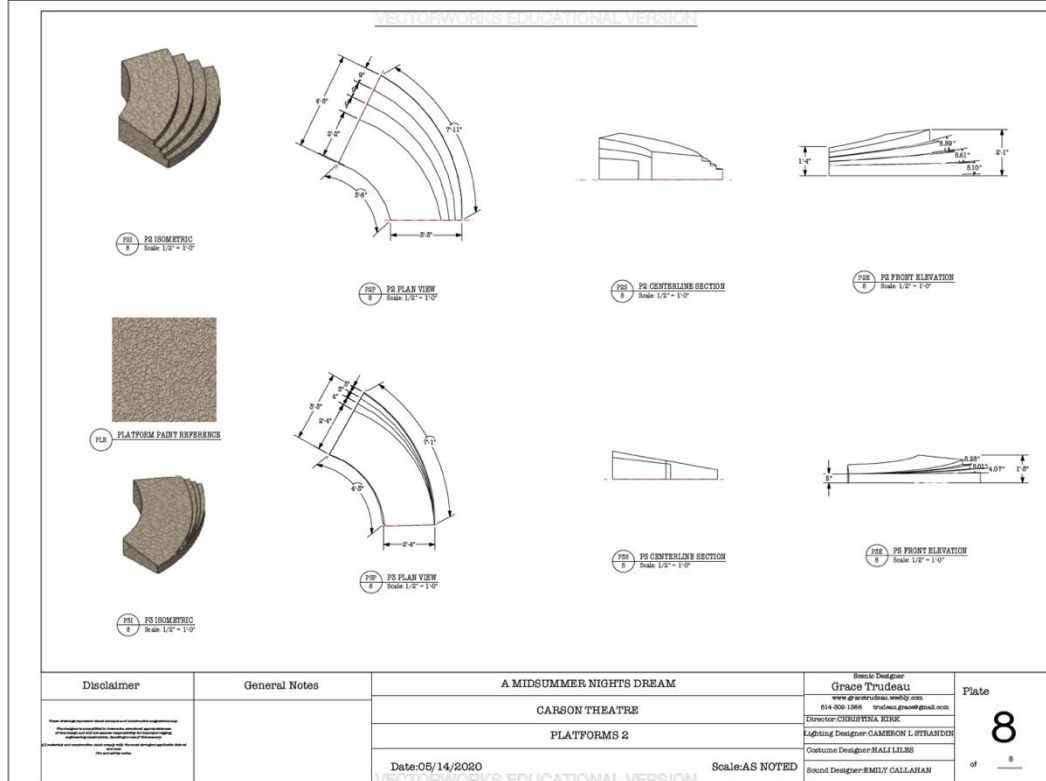
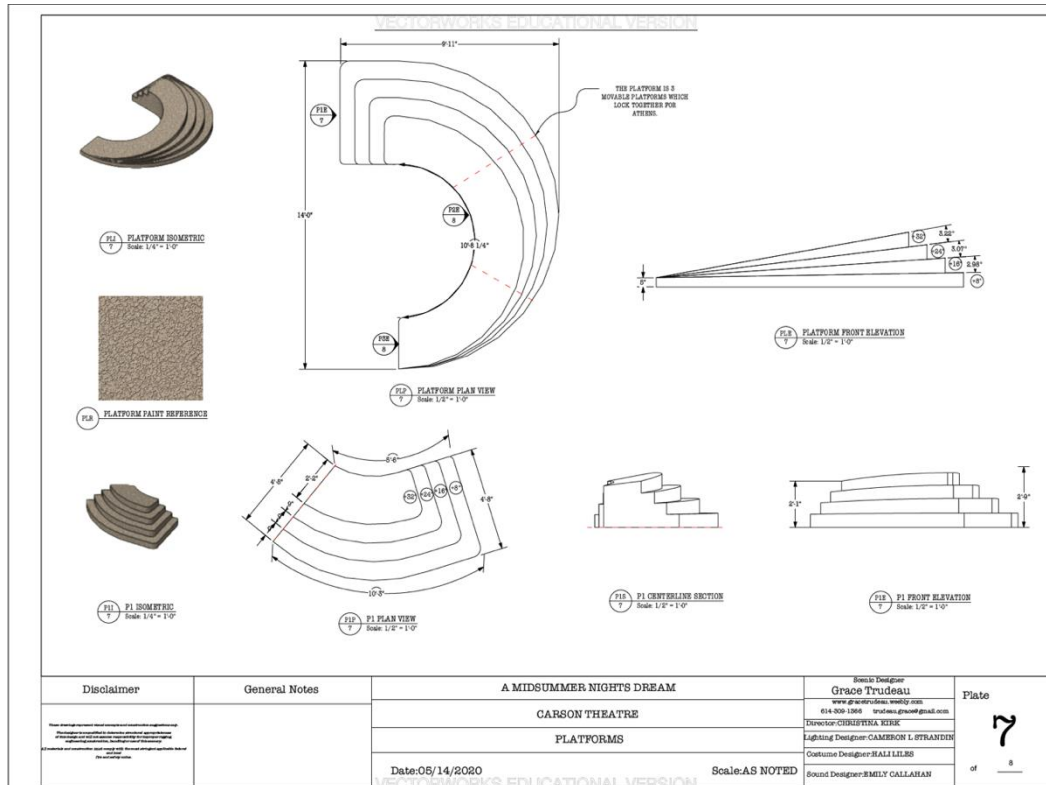
A 3D Vectorworks model with the center stair unit and Athens drop.

2.5 PRELIMINARY DRAFTING PACKET









2.6 FINALIZED DESIGN

Once I felt confident the design needed updates, I quickly found inspiration in the Sunken Gardens, where the idea of controlling nature to create a false oasis within city limits accorded with Prof. Kirk's concept.¹ The Gardens offered me a connection between Athens and the Forest—through the gazebo. The gazebo represents industrial power, a man-made structure, and civilized society for Athens. It is also a metaphor for controlled horticulture within nature. The imagery of the gazebo was inspiring but once again I found myself stuck on too much Athenian and not enough Forest.

Knowing I wanted to use a turntable, I realized I did not have to commit to a full gazebo. The set could rotate 180° and reveal a whole new world, as it did in Reinhardt's productions. I toyed with the idea of having Athens and the Forest separated into halves of the turntable, but these worlds interpenetrated each other; they are indeed mirror images of each other. I realized that I could utilize the gazebo structure in both worlds with different paint treatments on each side. Athens is a weathered bronze gazebo atop cold, concrete painted columns confining the tree. The top ring of the Athenian gazebo is lined with ivy filled pots, which are painted a sandy brown to match the columns capital and base rings. The tree then appears when the turntable revolves, and the columns paint transitions to a warm brown bark with natural tree limbs grafted to each face. The columns are the stabilizing force for the tree because each of the four branches extend out to a column from the base of the tree which is centered on the Astroturf-covered turntable. The tree is climbable for the actors on the base and the two most forward branches. The stage left branch I designed to become Puck's perch, allowing him to spy from a sitting position on other characters and the stage action in general. The stage right branch I designed for actors to hang from; the whole tree is climbable to provide multiple levels and blocking positions for Prof. Kirk. As I was working through this new idea for the tree, I determined the tree was

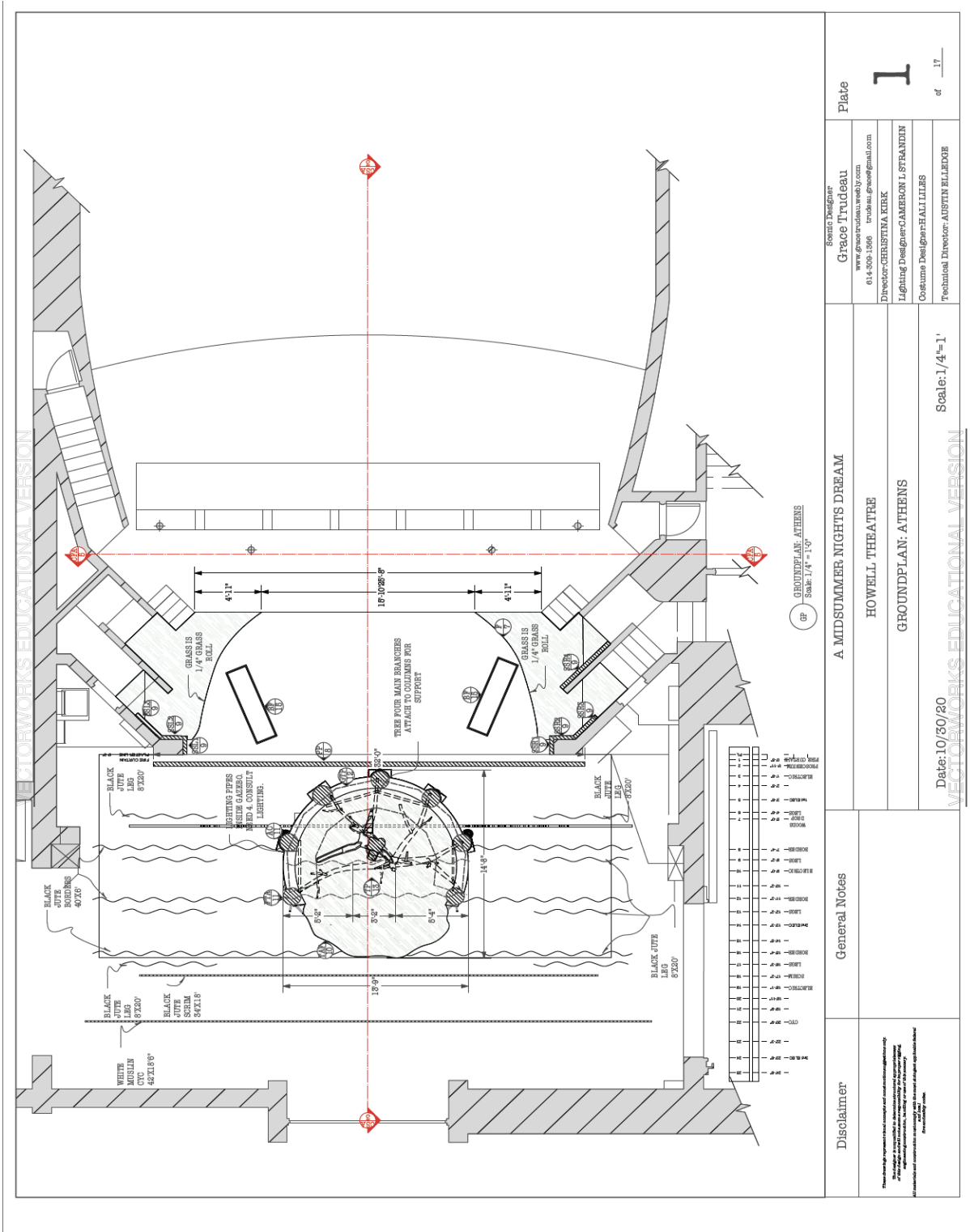
¹Since its development on a former city dumpsite in 1930, the Sunken Gardens in Lincoln is the only Nebraska venue listed in National Geographic Magazine's list of "300 Best Gardens in the United States and Canada."

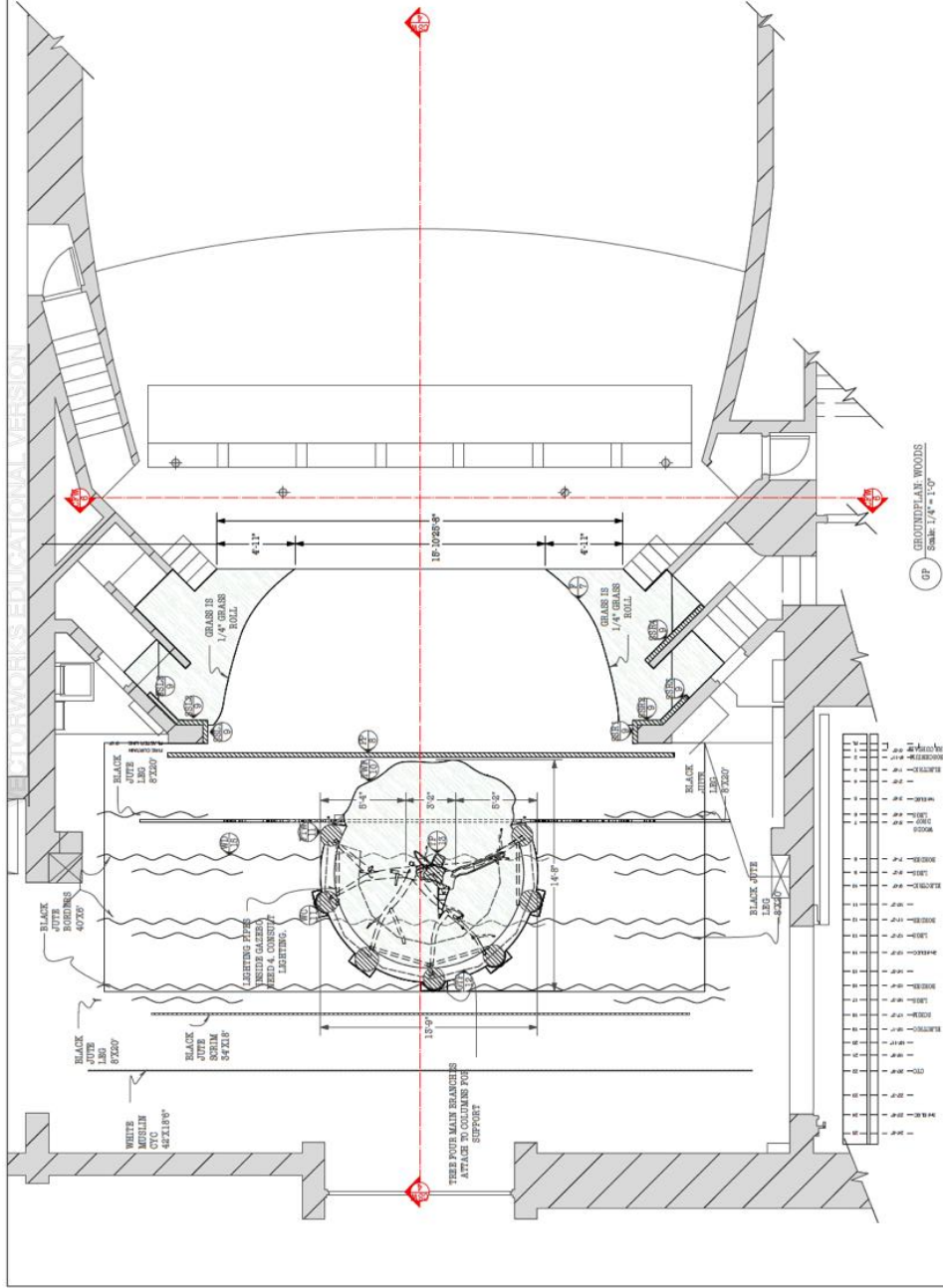
not only a source for staging but also an important character in our show. This realization led me thinking about putting life into the tree. I ultimately realized that lighting was the best means to execute that idea. I worked closely with undergraduate lighting designer Cameron Strandin to establish language for the tree lighting effect, the appropriate moments to use the light effect, and the placement of the lights. In order for the tree to feel alive, we decided the light had to originate from inside the tree. After much discussion, Cameron found a solution using LED (light emitting diode) tape embedded into the bark. We then conducted multiple tests, carving the foam for the tree into different depths and widths for the lights, establishing the correct light placement in the tree's foam bark (which accommodated climbing actors), protecting said actors, and testing the lights' intensity and movement. A positive factor in the multiple rescheduled opening dates was the time for testing complicated and novel lighting idea.

The paint transition on the columns from ionic shaft to tree came easy, as both structures were elongated tapered tubes. However, the gazebo top created an interesting challenge—do we hide the top in the Forest with leaves and foliage? Or do we embrace it as an element in both worlds? One aspect of Prof. Kirk's concept I had yet to capture was the weather patterns. In a conversation with Prof. Madsen, we concluded that hiding the top with leaves would draw the eye up as the turntable shifted the set's visual weight. I then decided to embrace the gazebo top as an opportunity for further narrative purposes, especially in regard to the weather patterns. The gazebo top in the Forest was painted a pale gray, serving as a secondary cyclorama localized to the Forest, with lighting positions embedded into the gazebo structure for mood changes. The goal with this lighting effect was to allow the stage cyclorama to reflect the time of day, while the Forest cyclorama reflected emotions present during the changing scenes. The proscenium in both iterations of the design remained the star field face cutouts, which derived from the pinnacle research image of the industrial man kissing the organic woman.

CHAPTER 3: PRODUCTION PROCESS

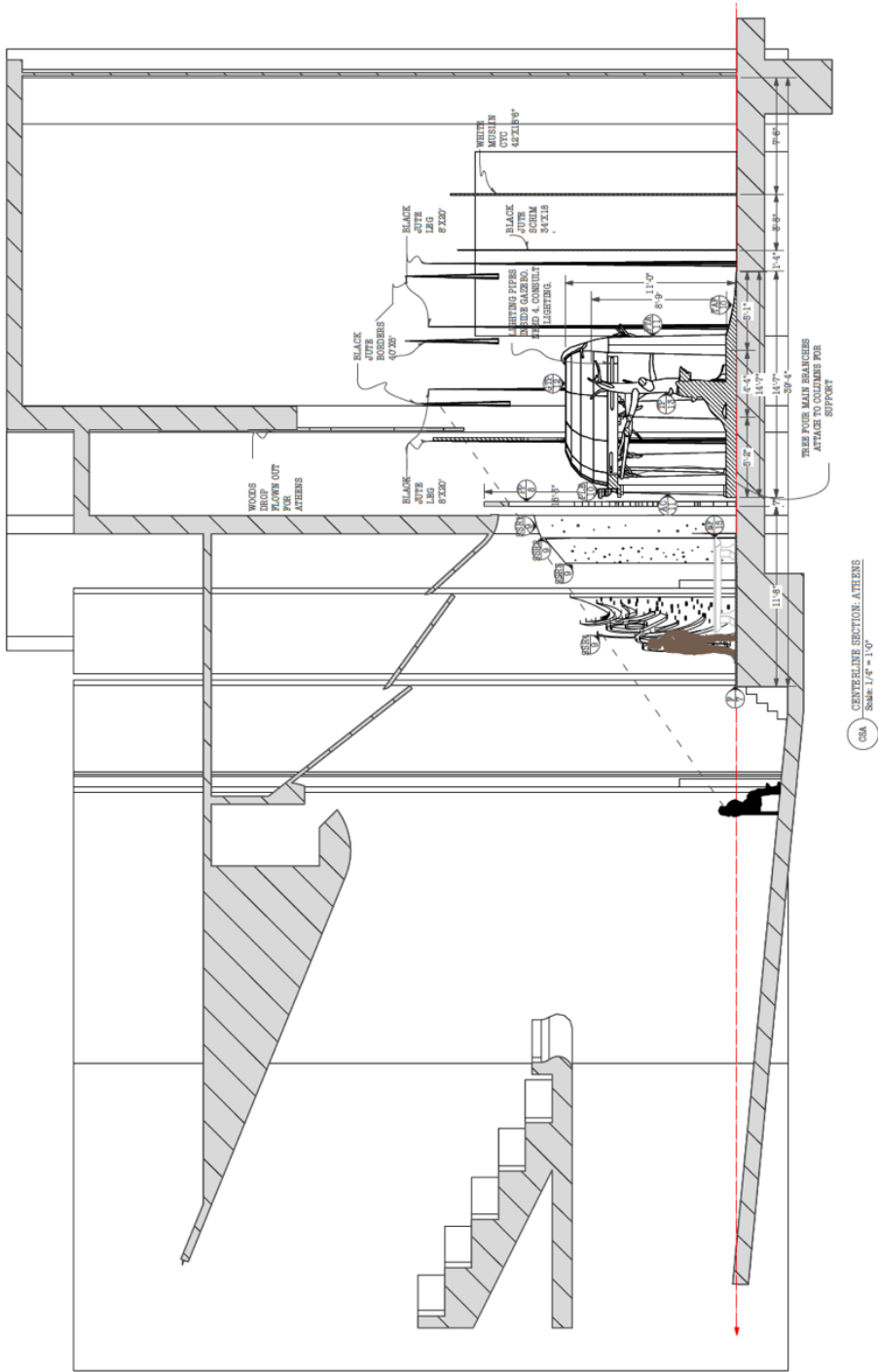
3.0 DRAFTING PACKET



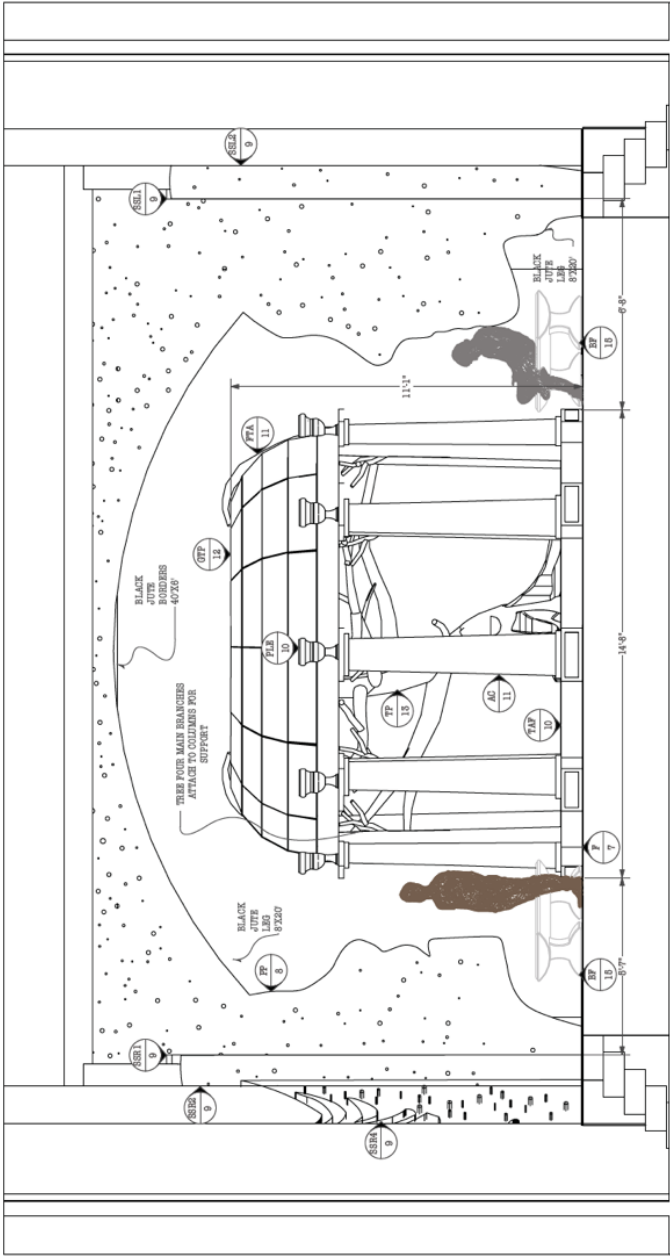


<p>Disclaimer</p> <p>This is a preliminary drawing and is not to be used for construction. It is the responsibility of the client to verify all dimensions and materials. The designer is not responsible for any errors or omissions. The drawing is for informational purposes only.</p>	<p>General Notes</p>	<p>A MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM</p> <p>HOWELL THEATRE</p> <p>GROUNDPLAN: WOODS</p> <p>Date: 10/29/20</p> <p>Scale: 1/4"=1'</p>	<p>Graphic Designer</p> <p>Grace Trudeau</p> <p>www.gracetrudeau.com</p> <p>614-551-1505</p> <p>gracetrudeau@gmail.com</p> <p>Director: CHRISTINA KIRK</p> <p>Lighting Designer: CAMERON L. STANTON</p> <p>Costume Designer: HALLIE LEE</p> <p>Technical Director: AUSTIN ELLEBOE</p> <p>Plate</p> <p>22</p> <p>of 17</p>
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VECTOWORKS EDUCATIONAL VERSION

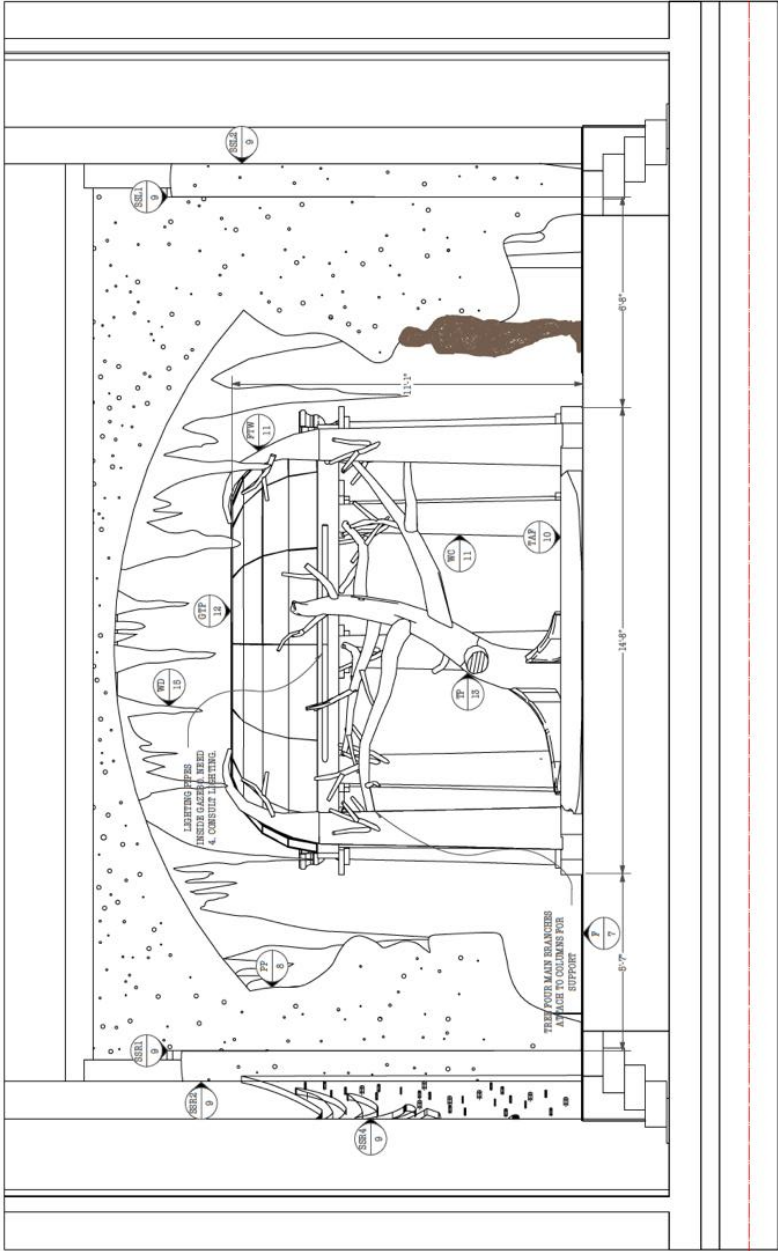


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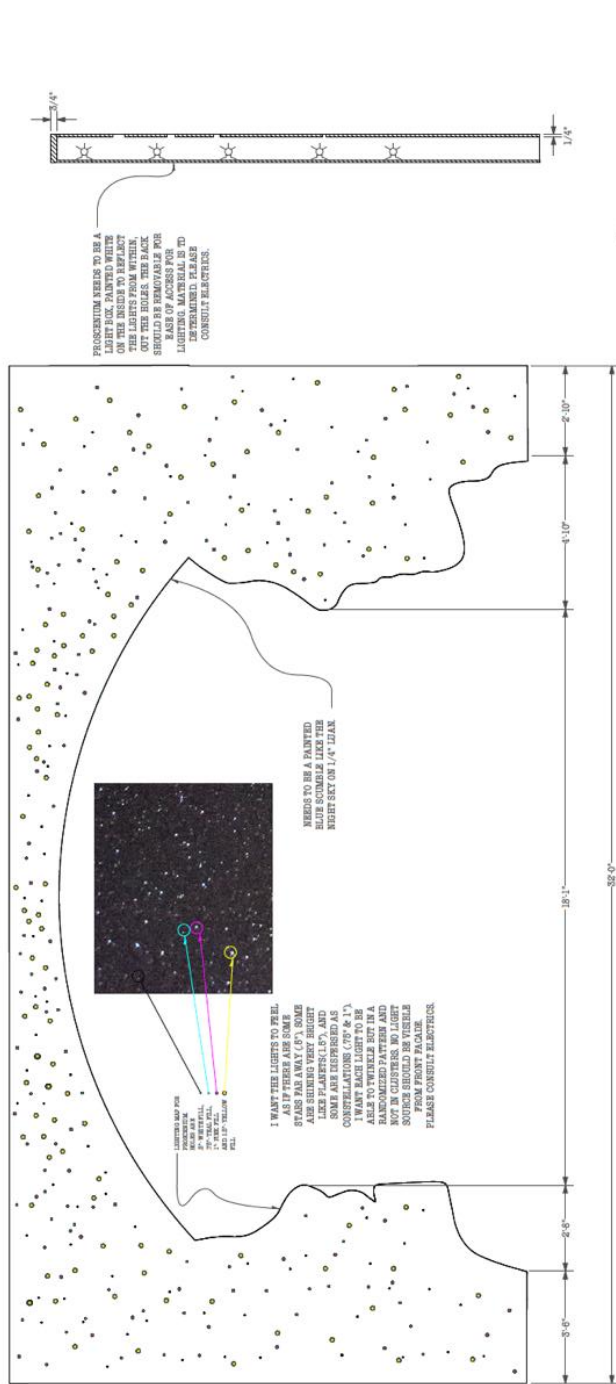
COMPOSITE FRONT ELEVATION: ATHENS
Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"

Disclaimer	General Notes	A MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM	Scene Designer	Plate
			Grace Trudeau	
			www.gracetrudeau.com	
			614-509-1506 trudeau.grace@gmail.com	
		HOWELL THEATRE	Director: CHRISTINA KIRK	5 of 17
		COMPOSITE FRONT ELEVATION: ATHENS	Lighting Designer: CAMERON L. STRANDIN	
			Costume Designer: HALL LILLES	
		Date: 10/29/20	Technical Director: AUSTIN ELLIOTT	
			Scale: 1/2"=1'	
VECTORWORKS EDUCATIONAL VERSION				



COMPOSITE FRONT ELEVATION: WOODS
Scale: 1/2" = 1'0"

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		<div>HOWELL THEATRE</div>			<div>Director: CHRISTINA KIRK</div>
		<div>COMPOSITE FRONT ELEVATION: WOODS</div>			<div>Lighting Designer: CAMERON L. STRANDIN</div>
		<div>Date: 10/29/20</div> <div>Scale: 1/2"=1'</div>			<div>Costume Designer: HALLIE LILLES</div> <div>Technical Director: AUSTIN ELLEBOE</div>



PDS PROSCENIUM DETAIL SECTION
Scale 1/8" = 1'-0"

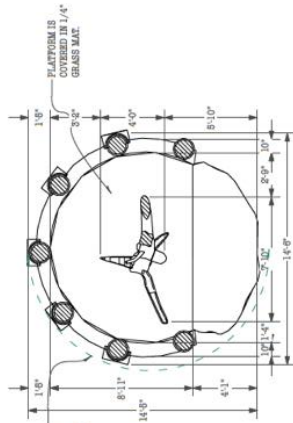


PROSCENIUM REFERENCE

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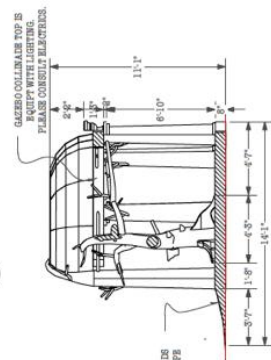
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TS

TURNABLE SECTION

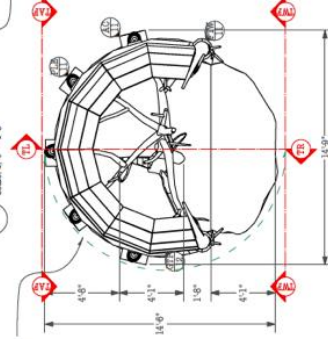
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TL

SL CENTERLINE SECTION

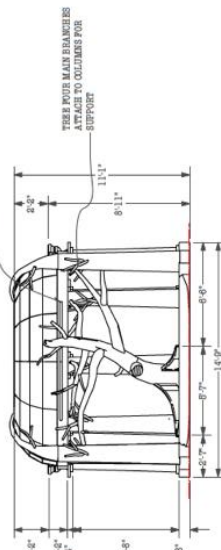
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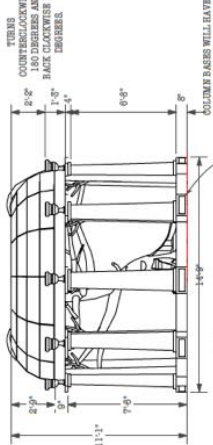
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TURNABLE PLANT

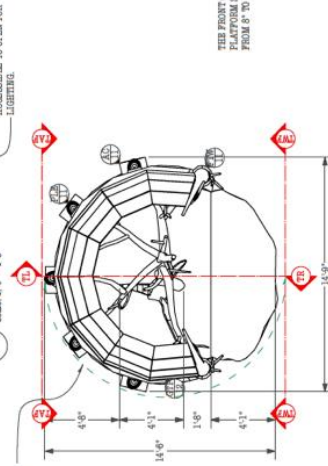
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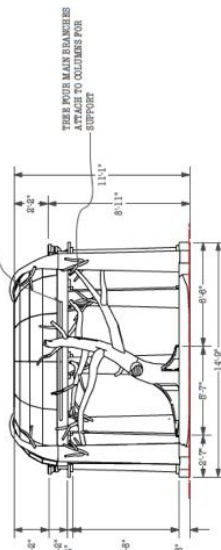
WOODS FRONT ELEVATION
Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"



TAP ATHENS FRONT ELEVATION
Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

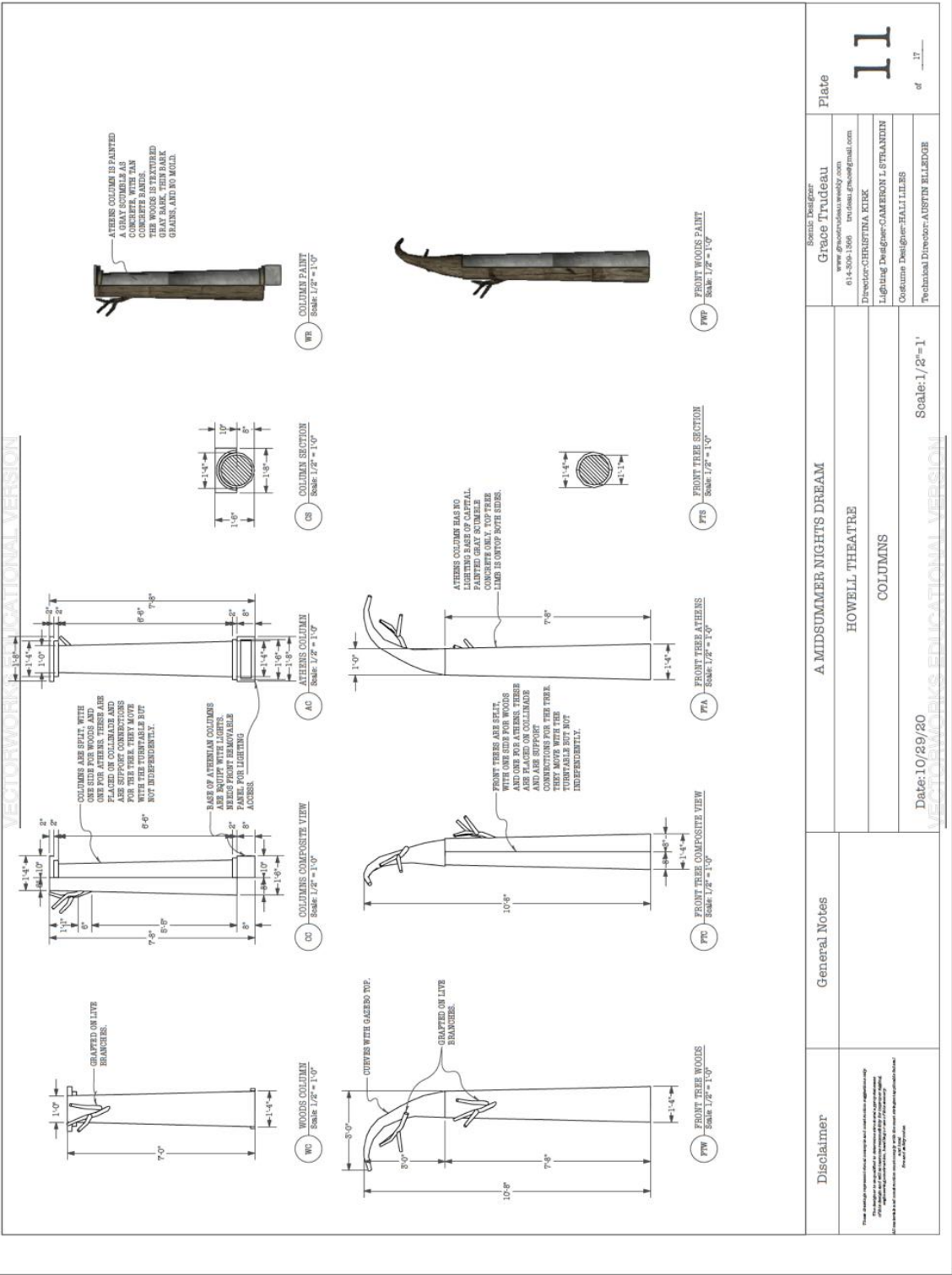


— LIGHTING PIPES INSIDE
CARRIED UNDER A CONCRETE



WOODS FRONT ELEVATION
Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

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3.1 PAINT ELEVATIONS

FLOOR PAINT ELEVATIONS
 MIDWINTER NIGHTS DREAM
 HOWELL THEATRE
 FLOOR PAINT ELEVATIONS
 GRACE TRUDEAU
 16

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GAZEBO PAINT ELEVATIONS
 MIDWINTER NIGHTS DREAM
 HOWELL THEATRE
 GAZEBO PAINT ELEVATIONS
 GRACE TRUDEAU
 17

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ALL PROSCENIUM AND SPLAY WALLS SHOULD BE PAINTED A BLUE GRADIENT TO RESEMBLE A REVOLUTION BURNING. THE SHOULD BE DARK BURN BLUE ALONG THE EXTENSION WITH SMALL POCKETS OF LIGHT AND ROYAL BLUE IN THE CENTER. MATCH COLORS.

3 PROSCENIUM SAMPLE
Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

Disclaimer	General Notes	A MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM		Scene Designer Grace Trudeau www.gracetrudeau.com 614-200-1966 trudeau.grace@gmail.com	Plate
		HOWELL THEATRE		Director: CHRISTINA KIRK	18
		SPLAY WALLS/PRO PAINT ELEVATIONS		Lighting Designer: CAMERON L. STRANDBERG	
		Date: 2/22/21		Costume Designer: HALL LILES	
		Scale: AS NOTED		Technical Director: ADAM BLAND	

ADD BARK AT TOP AND BOTTOM, COLUMN BARK (BARK) IS PAINTED TEXTURED GOLDEN TAN. MATCH COLORS.

THE WOOD TREATMENT FOR THE COLUMNS SHOULD BE TO BE A TRIPPLE, YOUNGER TREES BARK TEXTURE WITH A COOL, TONED BARK COLOR. TREES SHOULD HAVE A WHITE SEEN. LIVE BRANCHES SHOULD BE SHAPED INTO THE BARK OF THE BRANCHES WITH LEAVES.

CONCRETE FOR COLUMNS AND BRANCHES SHOULD BE A LARGE GRAY SCUMBLE WITH TEXTURED BLUE AND A DARK WASH ON TOP. MATCH COLORS.

5A COLUMN SAMPLE WOODS
Scale: 3/4" = 1'-0"

5A BRANCH SAMPLE
Scale: 3/4" = 1'-0"

Disclaimer	General Notes	A MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM		Scene Designer Grace Trudeau www.gracetrudeau.com 614-200-1966 trudeau.grace@gmail.com	Plate
		HOWELL THEATRE		Director: CHRISTINA KIRK	19
		COLUMNS PAINT ELEVATIONS		Lighting Designer: CAMERON L. STRANDBERG	
		Date: 2/22/21		Costume Designer: HALL LILES	
		Scale: AS NOTED		Technical Director: ADAM BLAND	

3.2 FINAL RENDERINGS



Photoshop rendering using the 3D Vectorworks model and Hali Liles costume renderings.



Photoshop rendering using the 3D Vectorworks model and Hali Liles costume renderings.

3.3 ¼" SCALE MODEL












3.4 SET DRESSING PAPERWORK

A Midsummer Nights Dream - Set Dressing List

Venue: Nebraska Reperatory Theater- Howell Stage	Director: Christina Kirk
Scenic Designer: Grace Trudeau	Props Designer: Nathan Alexander

Referen ce	Dressing	Description	Visual		Working Notes
	(name)	(location, paint, function)			
SET DRESSING					
Forest Drop	Moss and Ivy	wrapped into the opening of the army netting, I want moss and ivy hanging down, dispersed throughout the drop			this should be flame proofed, work with designer on dressing day, green
Tree	Leaves	attached to live branches, leaves should be placed atop the tree creating the canopy			leaves should be flame proofed and placed to help conceal lights in canopy, green oak tree leaves
Tree	Tall Grass	I would like tall grass strands at the base of the tree roots and the base of the tree columns			This should be green and light brown for sun age
Canopy-Forest	Ivy	ivy should be hanging along the top of the canopy base ringon the Forest side, as it is growing around the architecture			green ivy
Pots	Ivy	pots on Athens side should be filled with drooping ivy			this is the same ivy which is growing out of the pots and onto the base on the canopy on the Forest side

3.5 COLLABORATION

The creative and production team included Christina Kirk(director), Hali Liles (costume designer), Cameron L. Strandin later Abbey Lynn Smith (lighting designers), Emily Callahan (sound designer), Nathan Alexander (props designer), Austin Elledge (technical director), and Kayci Johnston (stage manager). The collaborative process began February 14, 2020, when all members met to discuss the script and Prof. Kirk's concept. After Prof. Kirk pitched her concept idea, we as a group were all surprised by her interest in Titania's opening monologue as the basis for the show's theme of climate change. Her interest derived from the idea of the changeling child and the utopian idea of improving today for a better tomorrow. She also emphasized Shakespeare's use of lunatics, lovers, and poets as characters in this show as sources of chaos. As I began to grasp Prof. Kirk's ideas, visual research became essential to explain my interpretation of the concept. As Prof. Kirk and I began working together, I realized she communicates and responds well to visual information rather than to description. She herself began bringing photos to meetings to communicate her thoughts, a practice I had not experienced from a director before. It was helpful to have a collaborator who also communicated visually, because it stimulated fruitful conversations. As a result, we ended meetings with a clear idea of what needs to be done and how to proceed, which helped move the project to progress aesthetically. Once Covid-19 shut down personal meetings, however, communication became difficult. We all began to scramble to finish discussing design ideas with hopes yet of producing the show at its scheduled time. This truncated process was one reason I initially settled on a design which did not effectively reflect the concept. When we returned to school in the Fall of 2020 and Nebraska Rep artistic director had moved the show to a later date, Prof. Kirk was more than happy to sit down with me again and allow me to redesign the show. Although Prof. Madsen had informed her of my intentions, she was pleased to use the extended time to gain a design which was more aligned with her needs and concept.

I also worked closely with the lighting designers. My initial design had only one scenic lighting effect, which was the star field proscenium. The second design however, had many more ideas for scenic lighting elements: the star field proscenium, the lights embedded in the tree, and the gazebo top cyclorama. The second design blossomed with lighting ideas because the change in venue; we had voiced initial concern about the adequacy of electrical amperage in the Carson Theatre, but there was no such concern in the Howell Theatre. Although our concept of climate change was serious, I did not want the comedic or the fantastical elements of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to be lost. I felt the lighting effects opened the scenery up to more opportunities for emotional response to the play's flights of imagination. With these ideas, the lighting designers and I worked closely with each other to establish the design's visual language. We wanted to confirm that our ideas were cohesive between lights and scenery. Cameron and I had worked together on two previous productions and had developed a collegiality which allowed for scenic and lighting to work together on design choices. When working with Cameron, I usually appeared at our meetings with a wild idea, such as lighting the tree. He typically would respond with trepidations; he typically then returned to the following meeting with ideas and solutions. This working relationship allowed us to establish paint colors and finishes, important lighting moments, and scenic transitions. If he had any concerns following our conversations, he initiated and carried out any needed test, such as the lighting for the tree and the proscenium. Once the show was finally moved to open on October 1, 2021, production faculty unfortunately moved Cameron to design lighting for *Dracula: Mina's Quest*. He was a graduating senior and could not complete any design post-graduation. As he moved to the new show, Abbey Lynn Smith, first-year lighting design graduate student became lighting designer for *Midsummer*. Abbey came into the project after designs had been completed and building had begun. I did not want her to feel as if her design ideas could be fused with our ideas, so we met for a long conversation on March 29, 2021. During this meeting I

explained to Abbey my understanding of Prof. Kirk's concept, my approaches to her concept, and the lighting effects in general. Although Cameron and I had talked about moments throughout the script for lights, we had not yet discussed a narrative for the various lighting effects. Abbey brought fresh perspective to the script, which by the time she became the designer I had already deliberated upon for over a year. She took delight both in my design and Prof. Kirk's concept. Her enthusiasm led to the tree's lighting narrative which we decided would replicate the moon's cycle in the sky. The idea came from Shakespeare's numerous references to the full moon as an origin of the chaos ensuing on stage. We decided to shift the majestic elements of the moon's light into the tree's light. Abbey also had the idea to create analogies between of each scene's mood and a specific weather pattern, which manifested themselves in the lighting atop the gazebo.

The third person with whom I closely collaborated was Austin Elledge. Together we budgeted, built, and changed the show throughout the discontinuities of the pandemic, creating two designs for two different venues. Austin of course asked the pivotal question which determined my redesign (as noted above), but he was influential from our first budget meeting onwards. Unlike many technical directors, Austin was well-versed in the script and its various nuances. His thorough understanding of Shakespeare's dramatic strategy helped me to make well-informed decisions about moments in the show which required emphasis. He helped me work through my two designs and was consistently patient with necessary alterations. We were constantly in communication on my ideas and my process of design even prior to the full packet, which I distributed on [provide date]. Austin was already searching for solutions and materials before then. His thorough research and problem-solving was the reason there were no major cuts of scenic elements at our final budget meeting. My first design was well under budget and a fairly simple build, so when I decided to redesign, Austin was the person I was most hesitant to tell. I did not want the burden of my design flaws to fall on him, but he was more than willing to work

together to create a design which made us proud. Once I submitted the show's final design packet, he worked to co-ordinate among all departments how to proceed with testing and build schedule. The design was complex and required coordination among multiple departments prior to build. We had to coordinate with lighting how to build the set with ease of use. That coordination that ease meant figuring out where to locate the power inputs, how to hide and feed cables to lights, and how to protect the lights from aforementioned climbing actors. Once we solved those problems we had to work through a schedule and factor in exigencies of the build process. We worked through tests of scenic and lighting elements, paint textures, and set functions. They prompted us to use the most appropriate build materials and to identify missing design ideas such as the above noted seam coverage in the Gazebo top. I had not realized panels for the Gazebo I designed would not be stable enough to stand on their own and required a support frame. Austin quickly identified the problem in a test build and provided multiple solutions for me to choose from to fix the problem. This collaborative effort continued through the entire build process as we tested the tree's climbable function. Austin built the frame for the tree and we tested climbing on all the designed positions. We had Prof. Kirk come into the shop and explain the various standing, sitting, and hanging positions on the tree to ensure they were what she needed for actor blocking. Once we had her approval, we moved to covering the tree with foam which would be carved look like the tree's bark. Austin was, like me, a sixth-semester graduate student, therefore he worked to have the set fully built before we graduated.

I did not work closely with Hali Liles, Emily Callahan, Nathan Alexander or Kayci Johnston. I spoke with Hali to ensure the costumes would be integrated with the set and to ensure that costumes functioned effectively on the set. I adjusted my tree paint treatment to be soften its surface, preventing cuts and snags. I also spoke with Emily and Abbey to determine the weather cues for lighting and sound throughout the show. Nathan and I discussed props, many of which needed to accord with scenic

elements. I discussed with Nathan the foliage set dressing, since he had charge of dressing the set according to my design. Kayci and I discussed ways to avoid injuries to actors who climbed the tree.

CHAPTER 4: ZOOM REHEARSAL AND FILMING PROCESS

4.0 ZOOM SCENIC DESIGN

As a result of Covid-19 health and safety guidelines, faculty moved rehearsals and performances for the year 2020-2021 to a Zoom performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. During the fall semester, the cast worked via Zoom on dialect, character development, and script analysis with Ann Marie Pollard (assistant professor of practice in the Carson School). At the end of the fall semester on November 5th, the cast performed a run-through on Zoom for faculty and the design team. The cast began rehearsing in the fall of 2020 because the show was moved to April 2021. The cast continued to rehearse via Zoom through the spring 2021 semester. However, once faculty determined that the show would move again (this time to October 1, 2021), Prof. Kirk decided to recast the show with graduating seniors. She and Nebraska Rep artistic director Andrew Park had scheduled a performance for May 2, 2021. As a consolation for the graduating seniors who were leaving the project. Prof. Kirk engaged First Degree Films of Lincoln, Nebraska to film four scenes which were to be included in the final Zoom performance. The four scenes were Puck meeting with the fairies, Demetrius and Helena in the Forest, woods, Hermia and Lysander finding a place to sleep in the Forest, and the mechanicals play rehearsal scene. Prof. Kirk selected these four scenes because student actors in them were all graduating. On February 25, 2021 the design team received word of the endeavor from Prof. Kirk. For the next few weeks, I worked with Prof. Kirk scouting a film location and creating Zoom backgrounds for the final run-through. We decided to film in Trago Park, located at the corner of North 22nd and U Streets in Lincoln. This location was in close proximity to the Temple Building, where costumes and make-facilities were located. Although the script has the action taking place at night, the best light for filming was available only during the day. In order to keep the background information consonant with the script, we decided the Zoom backgrounds had to match the film location. Therefore, I created

backgrounds from photos and videos of trees in Trago Park for the Forest scenes recorded on Zoom.

Prof. Kirk and I discussed the Zoom backgrounds and the need for their conformity with the design. She did not want to reveal the set designed for the production set to open on October 1, 2021. With the reality of filming and the desire for the backgrounds to appear consonant, using Trago Park for all Forest scenes and the Sunken Gardens for all Athens scenes. Since the Sunken Gardens were my inspiration for the design, the scene employing images of the Gardens was to be a prelude to the design of the live performance in October.

4.1 ZOOM BACKGROUND IMAGES





CHAPTER 5: POST-PRODUCTION

5.0 CONCLUSION

As I revisited my design process for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* while writing this thesis, I realized the immense growth the experience had occasioned within me. I worked through pivotal challenges during the process of design both as a person and an artist. Prior to this show, I had worked through the design process as if it were an experiment—I began with a question, created a concept or hypothesis, then researched my theories and designed a show. But this show taught me the fluidity required during the process for accomplishing a strong design. I learned the need to ask a director all the questions required to begin a design, which then became the basis for the visual information I needed to grapple with the concept in question. I also learned the importance in reading the script more than once. I used to feel like I could breeze through one reading and grasp all the nuances needed to design an environment. It took working on my first Shakespeare to realize my single read-through misses much information necessary for informed decision making. I am also grateful that Covid-19 provided me an extended thesis project, which allowed me to make important mistakes while also allowing time to learn and fix them.

Despite my mistakes and the multiple designs, the scenic design was strong and successfully, insofar as it aligned with the Director's concept. I feel the changes I made from the original design to the final design were crucial in the evolution of *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* imaginary focus on climate change. Although my evolution with the design was substantial, the final design had flaws. The proscenium treatments brought the set downstage, but I neglected the upstage visual plane behind the turntable. I feel the design ended at the turntable and the world was not completed as a whole.

I nevertheless take pride in this culmination of my design work so far, largely I learned such valuable lessons and made important mistakes. I am grateful to my fellow graduate students who

supported me, the student carpenters who built the set, and the actors who performed the show. I am also grateful the Nebraska Repertory Theatre believed in the power of the show to postpone it three times, in order to have performed for a live audience.

Although I am graduating, I will be returning post-graduation to fulfill my role with the Nebraska Rep as the scenic designer. I am returning to Lincoln, Nebraska for tech week and opening night. I am excited to see this project to completion and to continue work with the team to produce the show. The show, as noted previously, is set to open October 1, 2021.

For production photos please reach out to the designer via email at Trudeau.grace@gmail.com or contact the Nebraska Repertory Theatre.